



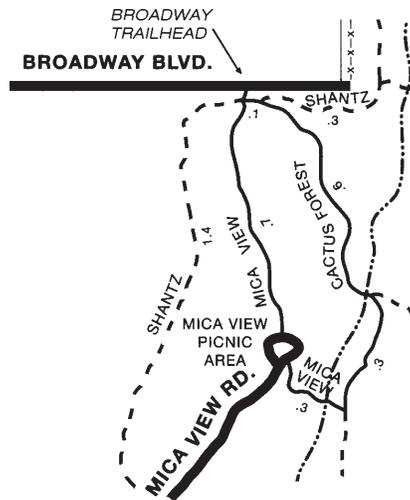
3 Walks in the Cactus Forest



Mica View Loop *A Desert Garden*

Distance: 2 miles
Time: 1 hour
Elevation Gain: none
Trailhead: Mica View
Picnic Area

The Mica View Trail is located just north of the picnic area, next to the hitching rail. Head north along the trail to see many young saguaro plants under palo verde “nurse trees”.



Black-crested phainopeplas and masses of mistletoe are also common in the area. At Broadway Boulevard, turn right on the Shantz Trail, then right again onto the Cactus Forest Trail.

Ahead of you are Tanque Verde Peak, covered with live-oak, and Mica Mountain, cloaked in ponderosa pine. The garden-like character of the desert gives chollas and prickly pears maximum space in an arid land. Crossing Javelina Wash, notice a blue paloverde on your left and a large saguaro at the junction with the Cholla Trail. Stay on the Cactus Forest Trail until you reach the Mica View Trail. Turn right and cross the mesquite-lined wash to complete the loop.

Loma Verde Loop *Copper and Cattle*

Distance: 3.3 miles
Time: 2 hours
Elevation Gain: 60 feet
Trailhead: Loma Verde
Trailhead

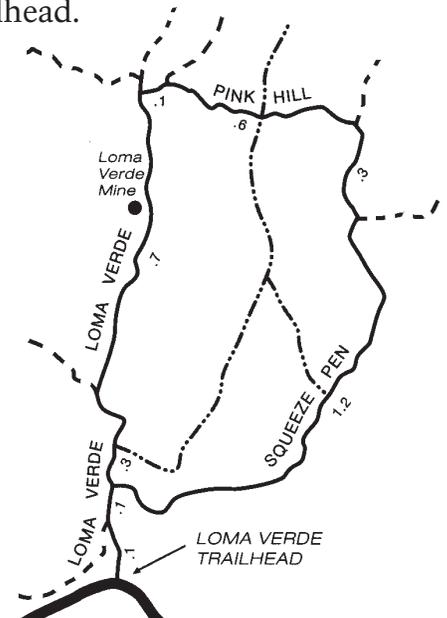
Follow the Loma Verde Trail through a mesquite woodland studded with barrel cactus and saguaros. Grinding stones in the park indicate native use of mesquite beans as food. The McCulloch homestead was here in the mid 1900's. Crossing Monument Wash twice, you climb a bluff onto a bajada, the gentle slope of gravel at the base of Tanque Verde Ridge. A sign tells the story of the Loma Verde “Green Hill” mine.

Joining the Pink Hill Trail, turn right and ascend the iron-stained slope for a panoramic view of the Cactus Forest and Catalina Mountains. Notice the vivid color of the green-skinned palo verde tree and numerous cacti. Annual rainfall of 12 inches classifies this area as “thorn scrub” according to some scientists. As you cross the wash, imagine torrents of water that come with summer monsoons.

Turn right at the Squeeze Pen Trail; the name recalls days when cattle were rounded up on this land. The Carrillo

family ranches this land under both private and public leases for many years. Creosote, with its shiny leaves, yellow flowers and fuzzy seed capsules, lines the trail. The rocky slopes of the Rincons are prime habitat for ocotillo, brittlebush, teddy bear cholla and saguaro.

You will soon re-enter the mesquite bosque. At the junction of the Loma Verde Trail, turn left to get back to the trailhead.



Garwood-Carrillo Loop *Home on the Range*

Distance: 5.3 miles

Time: 4 hours

Elevation Gain: 730 Feet

Trailhead: Douglas Spring
Trailhead

From the Douglas Spring Trailhead, proceed to the first junction and turn right on Garwood Trail. Check the saguaros for holes and the birds that made them: Gila woodpeckers and gilded flickers. To the west notice the Tucson Mountains: the high point, Wasson Peak, dominates the park's west district. At the Bajada Vista Trail, be careful to stay on the Garwood Trail (bear right, pass Wildhorse Trail, then bear left.)

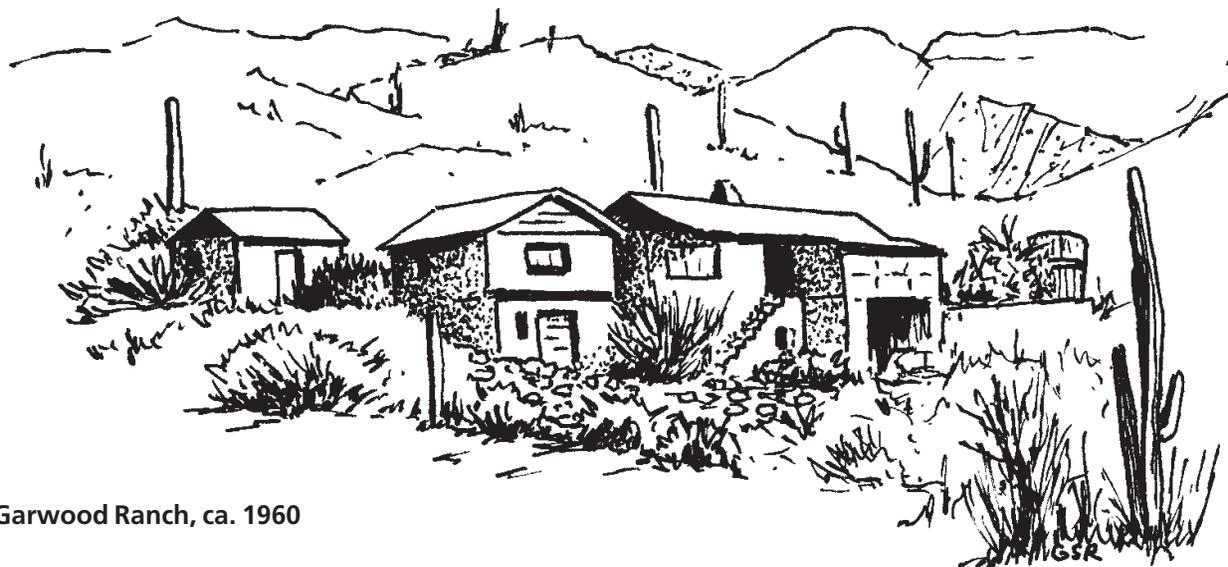
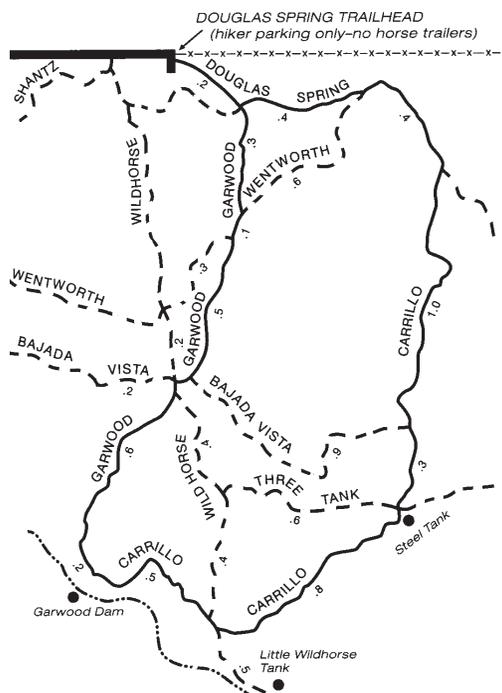
Just after climbing onto a rocky ridge, turn left onto the Carrillo Trail. Can you believe a cement truck once drove up this road? Find the concrete and stone foundation near the top of this hill which once held a generator. On the slope below, Tucson businessman L. Nelson Garwood built a "get away" ranch in the mid 1950's. The dam to the left provided a reliable water supply.

Passing the dam on your right, bear left and up into the Rincon Foothills. Fences along the way are reminders of legal cattle grazing that continued in the park until 1979. The transfer of these allotments to the National Park Service led to wilderness designation and restoration of natural processes.

At the Wildhorse Trail turn right, then immediately turn left. (The trail through the gate leads one half-mile to a natural water tank.) Your route continues to the steel tank at Rock Spring. The goldfish were stocked years ago by cowboys to discourage algae growth. Find the trail sign in the wash below and follow the Carrillo Trail to the left, up and out of the wash.

As you progress along the ridge you will notice vegetation changes: mesquite stands, grassy knolls, resurrection moss on bare rock and cottonwood trees where water nears the surface. At the top of the ridge consider the 100 square mile expanse of Saguaro National Park: the vast cactus forest below and the towering Rincon Mountains above. Descend to a wash and re-join the Douglas Spring Trail, main access to this high and wild country.

To complete the loop, turn left on the Douglas Spring Trail and descend, with views of the Tanque Verde Guest Ranch and distant Catalina Mountain peaks to the north. The last half mile is relatively flat as you return to the Douglas Spring Trailhead.



Garwood Ranch, ca. 1960